

South Dakota National Guard
Public Affairs Office
2823 West Main St.
Rapid City, S.D. 57702

Phone 605-737-6721
E-mail PAO@sd.ngb.army.mil

Nov. 18, 2008
PAO 11-18A-08

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Hot Springs student assists teens in saying “no” to drugs

By Pfc. Alex Abraham, 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

RAPID CITY, S.D. – Steven Pokorski, a Hot Springs High School student, conveyed the power of positive choices to middle and high school youth on Nov. 15 during the ninth-annual Youth-to-Youth conference held at Camp Rapid.

Pokorski spoke with youth on how individuals can make their own positive choices that can help students abstain from tobacco, alcohol and drugs. Relying on the work of volunteers and students, like Pokorski, the program can lead teenagers into positions of leadership and responsibility.

Youth-to-Youth is a peer-based drug and alcohol prevention program that gives teenagers a chance to come together and take a stand against drug use. It is an extra-curricular activity in many South Dakota middle schools and high schools. The conference is a youth led, adult guided and drug-free conference that students from 18 different schools volunteer to attend.

Pokorski is one such leader on the Youth-to-Youth staff, serving as a long-time attendant and manager.

“I started preparing for this about two months before (the conference) and I really enjoyed it,” said Pokorski. “It takes a lot of work, but this was a peer-led group, so I had a lot of help.”

The teenage staff members control the majority of the three-day conference events, deciding various activities, preparing skits and choosing the speakers. The teen staff had more command over the event than the adults supervising, who mainly provided the logistical support such as chaperones and driving.

“We had to do a lot of planning to prepare for the 150-200 students,” said Pokorski. “We were busy.”

Pokorski and the other teenage-staff members stress the importance of drug, alcohol and tobacco prevention through the various group activities and events.

“No alcohol, no tobacco and no drugs,” said Pokorski. “We like using high energy alternatives, positive peer support and teaching communication skills to each other.”

Pokorski hopes these skills will help other teens to find options other than drugs and alcohol. He is one of many high school students volunteering their time to ensure the Youth-to-Youth program has the strong presence it needs in South Dakota communities.

-30-

FOR MORE INFORMATION, please contact Maj. Orson Ward at (605) 737-6721, cell (605) 431-8753